

**An Analysis of Theme Through The Symbol of  
Bleachers in *Bleachers* by John Grisham**

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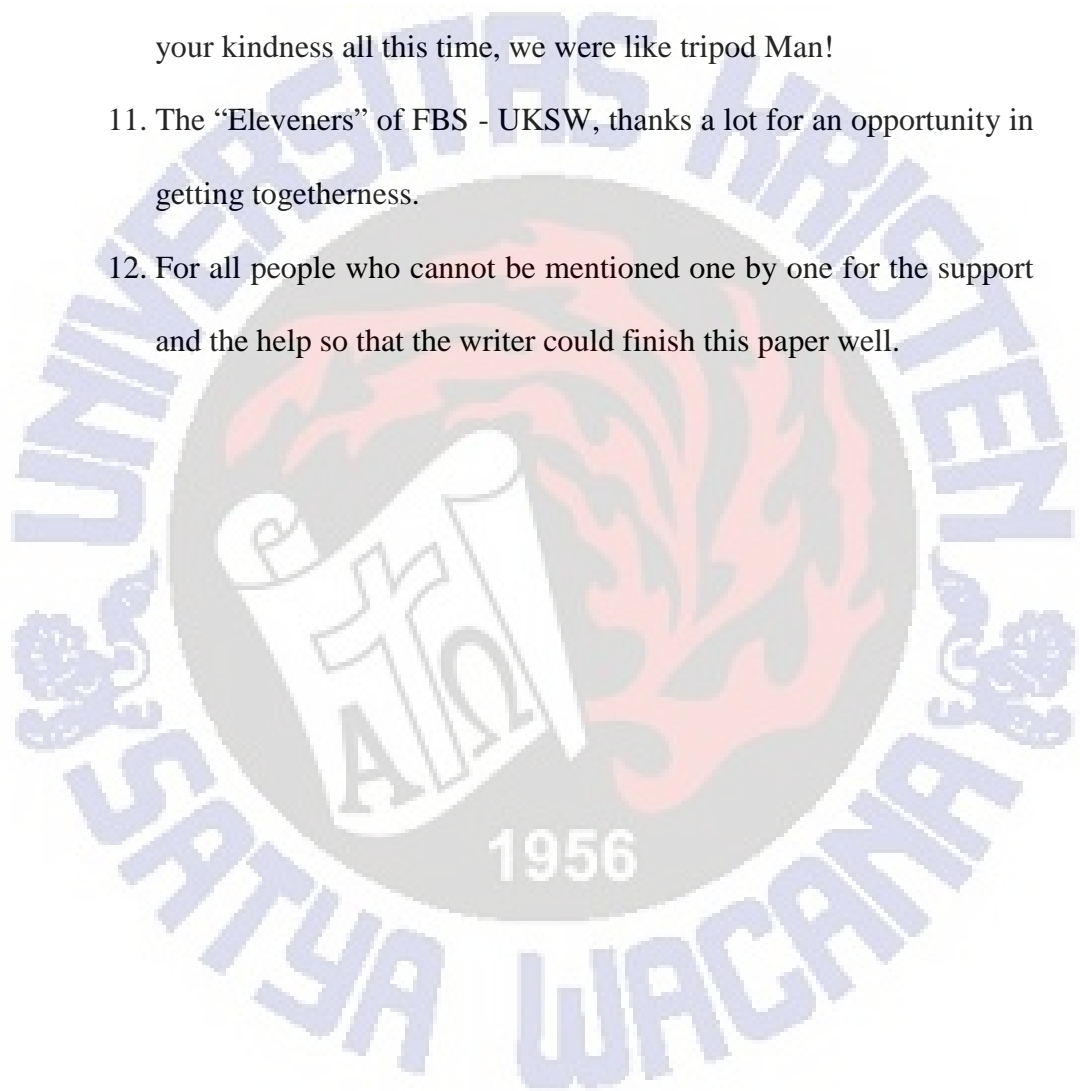
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## ABSTRACT

Literary work was shaped from various elements. Those elements influenced each other to create an intact work. Symbol and theme were the example of the elements. In John Grisham's *Bleachers*, "bleachers" could be the symbol of the story. Hence, the writer would like to prove that. The writer wanted to find out the meaning of "bleachers" to draw the theme.

Roberts and Jacobs' theory became the foundation in analyzing whether *bleachers* could be recognized as the symbol. They stated that symbol was recognized if signifying a sustained constancy of meaning, appearing to be of major important and referring to a significant idea, emotion, or quality. They also stated that theme was a central controlling idea.

Finally, as seen from signifying a sustained constancy of meaning, appearing to be of major important and referring to a significant idea, emotion, or quality, "bleachers" in *Bleachers* novel could be recognized as the symbol. It symbolized success. Success in this story referred to struggle, strong wills and victory. Those ideas shaped the theme of the story that **"success does not happen accidentally"**.

## ABSTRAK

Karya sastra terbentuk dari bermacam – macam elemen. Elemen – elemen tersebut mempengaruhi satu sama lain untuk menciptakan sebuah karya lengkap. Simbol dan tema adalah contohnya. Di dalam *Bleachers* karya John Grisham, *bleachers* mungkin adalah simbol dalam cerita tersebut. Oleh karena itu, penulis akan membuktikannya. Penulis ingin menemukan makna yang disimbolkan oleh *bleachers* untuk menentukan temanya.

Teori Roberts dan Jacobs menjadi dasar dalam menganalisa apakah *bleachers* dapat disebut sebagai simbol. Mereka mengatakan bahwa simbol diketahui jika menandakan sebuah ketetapan arti, tampil sebagai pusat perhatian and mengarahkan dirinya kepada ide, emosi atau kualitas berarti. Mereka juga mengatakan bahwa tema adalah pusat pengaturan gagasan.

Akhirnya dilihat dari penanda sebuah ketetapan arti, tampil sebagai pusat perhatian and pengarahan dirinya kepada ide, emosi atau kualitas berarti, *bleachers* didalam novel *Bleachers* dapat disebut sebagai symbol. *Bleachers* menyimbolkan kesuksesan. Kesuksesan dalam cerita ini mengacu pada perjuangan, tekad dan kemenangan. Ide – ide tersebut menyimpulkan tema cerita bahwa **“kesuksesan tidak terjadi secara kebetulan”**.



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Literature was stories, poems, and plays" (Culler 1997: 18). Literary had literary works that influenced the imagination of the human life. Culler said that literary work was linguistic event that described speakers, actors, events, and readers as a fictional world. Readers took a part to admit and imagine the story itself to get message inside so that they accepted the author's idea. As Kirsznner and Mandell said that imaginative literature was more likely than other types of writing, they not only included special words to communicate the writer's ideas but also they were memorable because using vivid imagery and evocative comparison (2000:1). Special words probably became abstract ideas that made symbols in the story. Further, they said that symbols were used to extend particular ideas or moods in any story. It was a thing that represented or stood for something else. It could represent something abstract or something that the author wanted to say (2000:254). Abstract ideas needed a great deal from the reader's imaginative to interpret the symbol of the story to get hidden message from the author.

Imaginative story might be based on the situations that had happened or perhaps never happened. For example, Carlson stated a story of

*Animal Farm* by George Orwell in his paper, *Ignorance*. He said that when education was not provided equally in a society, the class that received the most education would get power, keep power, abuse power and ultimately create a failed society. Orwell symbolized his idea through animals in delivering his message to the reader. It was nothing wrong by having imagination in the story. The readers could interpret the story based on their imagination. Roberts and Jacobs said that it was not to say that imaginative literature was not truthful, but rather that its truth referred to the human life and human nature (1987:2).

Finding the meaning of a symbol in the story was interesting to do. It had hidden message to the real situation. Potter said that a sign was designed to extend meaning. It was lined up with something that it represented (1967: 180). The sign was probably regarded as a substitute of the elements being signified, much as the flag stood for the ideals of the nation to represent the identity and the meaning of a nation. Further, Roberts and Jacobs also suggested that a symbol was usually a person, thing, place, action, situation, or event thought in short stories and other types of literature. It possessed its own reality and meaning and probably functioned at the normal level of reality within a story (1987:326).

Symbols represented deeper concept that used by an author to represent concepts and have a deeper meaning of saying something or sending a message to readers. *Animal Farm* used animals became symbols

to represent ideas of education in the society. The author of *Bleachers* novel also used “bleachers” to represent something. It probably had hidden ideas to the readers. “Bleachers” did not just become seats for spectators to glorify their team. In the real meaning, bleachers were long rows of benches, often consisting of alternating steps and seats. They could be moved around soccer or field hockey fields to large permanent structures that flank either side of an American football field. These bleachers for spectators were often made of wood (<http://bleachers.askdefine.com/>). Yet in this story, the author used “bleachers” as the title of novel might be on purpose. It might not just become benches in the football arena. It probably became a sign to the team and the spectators that led to other meanings.

*Bleachers* novel written by John Grisham was the new best seller of the contemporary novel. The first printing was published in the United Kingdom in 2003 by Century. Arrow Books published the second printing in 2004. Through this novel, Grisham wanted to take back unforgettable memories that led to the valuable future of the ex-student of Messina Spartan high school football. They trained by the best coach of Spartan, Eddie Rake. He trained the Spartans on the bleacher in gaining strength. The boys really hated the coach until they were graduated from the Spartan and swore never back to Messina town again. They came back to the “bleachers” to see the old friends and attend the funeral of the coach awhile remembered about the glorious day and the hard rehearsal on the



“bleachers”. The coach never taught them to fail in the game, yet the most important one was giving the best effort to get victory. As the witness, the “bleachers” itself were engaged on some important moments such as practices, conversations and last admiration. Therefore, the writer believed that the “bleachers” were a symbol that had special meaning and it drove the theme of the story.

In the work of literature, a theme became central or dominant idea. It was conveyed through the emphasis of certain words, events, or images; through the actions and reactions of characters. Every story must contain theme. Therefore, *Bleachers* novel also contained a theme that shaped the story. As Roberts and Jacobs said that a theme referred to something laid down, a postulate, a central or unite idea. In clearly, theme was a central controlling idea. When a writer created a story, he or she usually had a unifying idea or theme (1987: 363). Theme controlled the plot of the story, so that all events would be on the rail. More over Roberts and Jacobs also said that an author introduced things only as he or she had a bearing on the idea of characters, actions, symbols, statements, and dialogue probably made by how closely they related to the idea of theme (1987: 364). It meant that the element of literature could not stand itself. As this case of symbols and theme that could not stand on their own; they stood together in the story to build one formal unity inside to complete the essence. In this study, the writer wanted to prove that the “bleachers” used by the author in *Bleachers*

novel were not merely seats but they could be a symbol which at the end drew the theme of the novel.



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL REVIEW

Theoretical review presented the basic of analyzing the novel in this chapter. This chapter divided into two parts: review of related studies and review of related theories.

#### 1. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

One criticism came from *An Analysis of Theme Through the Symbol of Fence in August Wilson's Fence* by Tirza Yuliana Agatha Christy, unpublished Thesis, Satya Wacana School of Foreign Language. She studied about *August Wilson's Fences*. She discussed the symbolism that appeared through repetition, position, and emphasize. She proved that "fence" in *August Wilson's Fences* gave many meanings. She revealed general theme in the story from the meaning of the symbol.

There were two questions emerged as the problem of Christy's thesis. The two questions were first, how fence as the main symbol recognized was. Second, based on fence as the main symbol, what the general theme of August Wilson's *Fence* was.

To be able answered those two problems on her thesis, Christy used several theories such as Kirsznner and Mandell, Abrams, Bohner and the last was Annas and Rosen. She answered the symbol that appeared in the

story through main characters' conflict and main characters' conversation. She found the symbol through its repetition, position and emphasized by Kirsznner and Mandell's theory. After answering the first question, she found the meaning of the symbol of "fence". Then, she answered the second question and concluded the general theme of the story.

Second criticism came from *Symbols as Medium of Theme Reflection in Paolini's Inheritance* by Lanny Kusumawati & Deta Maria Sri Darta in the Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Bahasa dan Budaya vol 2, Unisbank Semarang. They talked about symbols could be used to implicitly suggest values, ideas, and attitudes, not excluded, to deliver the theme of the story. They had two steps in answering their analysis; first, they tried to find out the symbol in that story through the name of the main character, setting of place, and the objects. They used Mc Kenzie with Kirsznner and Mandell's theories to answer the first question. After they found the meaning of the symbol, they could answer the minor theme and the major theme of the story that reflected by using the symbol.

The writer of this study would like to observe the symbol of "bleachers" in *Bleachers* novel. In finding the meaning of the symbol that appeared in the *Bleachers* novel, the writer used Robert and Jacobs' theory. The writer would like to prove that there was theme on *Bleachers*



novel that derived from the symbol that was exist from opening until the end of the story.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES**

### **A. Theory of Symbol**

#### **1. Definition of Symbol**

According to Roberts and Jacobs (1987: 326), the definition of symbol was as follow:

“A symbol was usually a person, thing, place, action, or even thought. It pulled together a specific thing with ideas, values, persons, or ways of life”. In the story, a symbol had its own reality and meaning. It might be regarded as a substitute for the elements being signified, for example, the flag of a country represented the nation’s ideology. It indicated beyond itself to greater and more complex meaning. This idea supported by Potter, he said that symbolism meant particular objects or actions that used to represent relatively broad concepts (1967: 178). It would mean that the characters, setting, things and events in a work represented idea, intellectual attitudes that broader and more significant than the particular concrete representatives were.

Pickering and Hoeper added “the identification and understanding of literary symbols needed a great deal from the reader” (1981: 70). It

explained that the readers needed awareness, intelligence, maturity, sophistication and readers' sensitivity to detect the emphasis that placed on certain elements. So they could give the meaning of the symbol that used by the authors.

## **2. Recognizing Symbols**

Roberts and Jacobs in *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* told that when a symbol introduced, it liked a key opening a lock. It gave a specific combination of attitudes. It signified a sustained constancy of meaning. It gave the potential for wide- ranging application. It appeared to be of major importance (1987:326-328). It meant that the symbol could be recognized from the position of the work. It could be recognized by the repetition in the whole of the story. It consistently referred to beyond itself to a significant idea, emotion, or quality.

## **B. Theory of Theme**

### **1. Definition of Theme**

Theme was a central or unifying idea (Roberts and Jacobs, 1987: 363). This idea was supported by Vivante, he said that theme was underlying concept of a story (1980: 52). Then Perrine further stated that it was the unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story (1959: 137). Theme would exist only when an author had

mechanically introduced some concept of life that used to merge element for illustrate. In adding, he or she had seriously efforts to record life accurately.

## 2. Defining Theme

An author introduced things only as they firmly on the ideas; actions, characters, statements, symbols, and dialogue. Probably determined by how closely they related to the idea or theme (Roberts and Jacobs, 1987: 364). It told that theme was what a story about. A story probably about abstraction, about love, about family happiness, about death and it had to connect with the element of the story inside.

That statement supported by Boynton and Mack as stated in the book of *The Anatomy of Prose Fiction*, they said that the inevitability in understanding the theme had something to say about human experiences. The author involved the character in several events to show human being. In that case, the events took place to know human being living (1988: 77). It retold about human experiences that occurred before they influenced the life.

Further, Perrine added in the book of *The Anatomy of Prose Fiction*, the theme of the story stated very briefly or at a greater length. A good story would provide ideas with variety and complex concepts into life. The theme might be declared in the central insight

which explained the greatest number of elements in the story and related them to each other. The function of the interpretive writer was not to state a theme but to animate it (1988:78-79).

### C. The Connection between Symbol and Theme

The author of the story sent a deeper message to the reader by using symbol, but it needed a progress perception to find the message. The theme was used as the main idea of the story, a message or a lesson about life, society or human nature that made into a literary work. Theme needed another literary elements, in this case was symbol (Kirsznier and Mandell, 2000: 62).

Furthermore, Mark Lund stated in a paper of *Literary Criticism*; any element of the story was the one of formal unity. The formal unity meant any elements that built the story, which were symbol, allegory, plot, character, theme etc. There were a symbol and theme in the story of *Bleachers*. A symbol and theme could not stand by themselves; they had to stand together in the story to build one formal unity inside to complete the essence of the story.



## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS

#### **A. Recognizing *Bleachers* as a symbol**

Bleachers were defined as long seats for spectators in the football field. They were long rows of benches, often consisting of alternating steps and seats. The seats of these bleachers for spectators were often made of wood (<http://bleachers.askdefine.com/>). The meaning of bleachers did not just become seats for spectators that surrounded the field.

To recognize an object or thing was a symbol; we should look at the requirements of symbol. A symbol was recognized if it signified a sustained constancy of meaning. It appeared to be of major importance. It was recognized by its position and repetition in the whole of the story. Moreover, an object also was recognized as a symbol if it consistently referred to beyond its self to a significant idea, emotion, or quality.

#### **1. Signifying a Sustained Constancy of Meaning**

An object could be recognized as a symbol if signifying a sustained constancy of meaning. The meaning of the symbol brought same meaning continuously in the whole story although it gave another function besides the real meaning itself. Bleachers were important place for spectators to

support their team in the game. They yelled and brought their emotion on the bleachers liked statement below:

Ten thousand people once gathered on Friday nights to pour their emotions upon a high school...the deafening sound of the bleachers rattling as the fans jumped up and down. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 7).

Bleachers still became seats for spectator that watched the game. Yet when they jumped on the bleachers repeatedly, it produced loud sound. This was another function beside seats for fans.

Another utility of the bleachers was to give particular rehearsal. The Spartans boys had to run from first rows to the fifty rows repeatedly until they did not have power again to continue the rehearsal. It used by the coach in the rehearsal and became part of the training. It showed by the statement below:

... the assault on the bleachers. Every player knew what it meant, and when Rake yelled, "bleachers" half the team wanted to quit. ...started up the bleacher...for another eight sections ...After the second round, a tackle fell to the grass and began vomiting...(Bleachers, 2004, page 61).

The bleachers still became things to sit. Nevertheless, it used by the coach for vertical running. This did not change the real function of the bleachers but it could be used by other function such as for rehearsal. Since an object always brought same meaning which appeared and involved in story, it showed that bleachers were a symbol.

## **2. Appearing to be Major Important**

We also could say an object was a symbol if it appeared to be major important of the play through its position and repetition

### **2.1. From Position**

The symbol of bleachers appeared to be major important from its position as a title, liked a key opened a lock. It showed that bleachers were a key that involved the story. The position as the setting controlled the whole story. It brought main idea that happened in the entire story.

Beside it was used as a title, the symbol of bleachers appeared in the beginning as the setting introduction. It referred to the opening of the story focused on the symbol of bleachers. The placing of the significant position highlighted bleachers as the setting of the play. Bleachers became the most important for the supporters to sit and watch the game. It showed by the statement below:

On Friday night the entire town of Messina waited for the gate to open, then rushed to the bleachers where seats were claimed and nervous pregame rituals were followed. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 3).

The setting appeared for last time in the end of the story when the funeral has finished. The Spartans boys sat on the bleachers with the supporter to attend the funeral of the Coach. It became a place to close the story where the player gave farewell address to each other. Moreover, facing the future after Coach Eddie Rake past away as the statement below:

On the bleachers, the players shook hands and hugged and made the usual promises to get together more often....More hugs, more promises, more long

sad looks at the field where they once played under the great Eddie Rake. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 178-179).

From the explanation above, it saw that the position of the bleachers appeared majority as the setting. It emerged from opening until closing of the story. It showed that bleachers were a symbol.

## **2.2. From Repetition**

We could not say an object was a symbol not only through its position in the story but also it could be recognized if it repeated by narrator that supported the plot of the story and repeated by main character with another character in the conversation.

### **2.2.1. Repeated by Narrator**

The author controlled the plot through narrator's words. He took time to describe the setting through the characters' experience. On Tuesday, Neely came back to the Spartans' bleachers. It became a seat to remember the time when Neely on the field while the Spartans' band supported the team liked the statement below:

The roar of a long-ago crowd came back, a crowd packed tightly together up there, in the bleachers, with the band in the center of things blaring away with its endless renditions of the Spartans fight song. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 6).

The bleachers used by spectators to tone up the games where they supported the team. The bleachers and the fans could not be separated from the game.



In every play must be there were bleachers and spectators that involved in the story.

On a practice field in the distance a coach blew a whistle and someone was yelling....hearing the deafening sound of the bleachers rattling as the fans jumped up and down. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 7).

It still became seats to support the game with the fans sat on it. It always appeared when the team had a game.

The bleachers also became a section of the team. It always existed when the teams were on the field. It became a main factor for the coach to train the Spartans. The author clarified the setting to give explanation about the bleachers that not just became seats for supporters. Yet, it had another function for the team such as doing rehearsal on the bleachers liked statement below:

The players formed a long, reluctant, single line and began a slow jog around the track; started up the bleachers ... for another eight sections, then back on the track for another loop...After the second round, a tackle fell to the grass and began vomiting...(*Bleachers*, 2004, page 61).

The narrator controlled the story again through the presence of the bleachers where brought attention to the past of the Spartans. It took back the event that happened at that time to show the best quality of the team in different decades at that moment like statement below:

Small groups of players from different teams in different decades had gathered on the bleachers to wait. A few sat alone, deep in their own memories of Rake and glory that had vanished so long ago. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 85-86).

Bleachers used by the author to show that the fans still admired the coach and their favorite players that played in different era. They saw the glory time of their favorite team at that moment. They sat and enjoyed the nostalgia, liked statement below:

From the bleachers up above the fans looked down at the tent and the field and enjoyed the chance to identify their old heroes.....When the home bleachers were full, they began lining the fence around the track...This was a moment Messina would cherish and remember... (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 153-154).

Based on the explanation above, we could see that narrator took time to describe bleachers repeatedly. It meant that bleachers were a symbol in the story.

### 2.2.2. Repeated by Main Characters

Another way to recognize a symbol was if the object repeated by main character with another character in the conversation. There were some conversations between Neely as the main character with his teammates, Paul, Nat and Mal where they chatted about bleachers.

The bleachers appeared when Neely talked about rehearsal on the bleachers with Paul who was his teammate in the Spartans when they were on the thirty rows of the bleachers. They waited for the funeral's day.

Paul : "...Remember the time he made us run slot-waggle-right for two solid hours in practice?"  
 Neely: "Yeah, because you kept screwin' up"  
 Paul : "Then we ran bleachers until we puked"  
 Neely : "That was Rake," Neely mumbled." (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 14).

Bleachers became part of the team. They became equipment to give rehearsal to the Spartans boys until vomit on the field.

The bleachers still gave attention to the Ex-Messina Spartans when Neely and Nat spoke the event that happened in the past at the Nat's coffee shop when Neely became a hero for the team at that time.

Neely: "Look, some of us are gathering in the bleachers tonight, sort of a vigil, I guess," He said." Beer and war stories. Why don't you stop by?"

Nat : "I'd like that, "Thanks."

"Neely, I lied. I never hated you.' 'You were our all-American.'"(*Bleachers*, 2004, page 80).

Bleachers were a seat for Neely and Nat to remember the event that happened in their glory. Because of they were on the bleachers, the memory came back and became conversation about their glories.

Bleachers became part of the team. It became a tool to open the event that did not reveal yet before. It happened when Neely and Mal started conversation on the bleachers. Mal asked Neely to tell about his secret with the coach.

Mal : "Heard you boys talkin' last night up in the bleachers." "About the '87 game. I was there, so was everybody else. We figured somethin' happened at halftime, in the locker room...Never heard the real story, you know, 'cause you never talked about it."

Neely : "We got to the locker room at halftime and waited for Rake.....He said, "You miserable excuse for a football player.' I said, "Thanks, Coach..." (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 123-124).

Bleachers take back the secret unforgettable memory that happened in the past. It became a tool to force Neely in explaining his secret that had known yet by the fans.

From the three conversations above, it could be seen that bleachers always talked by the main character with other character. Since an object could be recognized as a symbol from its repetition, it showed that bleachers were the symbol of the story.

### **3. Referring to a significant idea, emotion or quality**

Another way to recognize a symbol was if the object brought significant ideas besides its real meaning. The existence of bleachers referred to the significant idea of the story that included bleachers where were set up exceed the population of Messina. It showed an effort in getting many fans to the Spartans' team.

Ten thousand seats up in the bleachers, for a town with a population of eight thousand on Friday night. They got their paychecks and bought their beer, and they came to town, to The Field where they clustered in one raucous pack at the north end of the stands and made more noise than the students, the band, and the townsfolk combined. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 8).

It meant that Spartan was a good team. They had many fans exceeded the population of the town. The citizens had to work hard in getting their own ticket. They were really enthusiastic with the Spartans' games.

Bleachers brought the quality of the Messina Spartans when it used by the coach to give them rehearsal on the bleachers. It became routines when they had training with their coach. It showed through the explanation below:

...the assault on the bleachers...when Rake yelled, "bleachers" half the team wanted to quit."

Rake: "I loved the sound of fifty players stomping up and down the bleachers. You guys are not in shape..... just loud enough to be heard. "slowest bunch I've seen." (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 61).

The bleachers brought their will. They really hated the rehearsal but still did not stop rehearsal although they puked. They always mocked by the coach with their best effort that had done. They never gave up with the bad condition of the rehearsal.

Based on the explanation above we could see that bleachers brought significant idea to the readers. It meant that bleachers were a symbol in *Bleachers* novel.

## **B. The Interpretation of the Symbol of Bleachers**

### **1. Bleachers symbolized struggle**

Bleachers symbolized struggle both of the Spartans and the fans. Fans' struggle to the first was getting the tickets and the second was supporting their team.

Bleachers symbolized struggle of the Spartans. Bleachers were their measurement and target of measuring their strength. They had to do rehearsal in the hot weather and finish the rehearsal on the bleachers although they had puked on it. Most of players wanted to quit the rehearsal. Running on the bleachers was five times harder than running on the flat track because they had to run on the vertical track. It made the knees had to work hard in lifting the body. It totally miffed when they had to do with the

extremely hot temperature. It made powerless and breathless. They struggled to finish the rehearsal to get more strength. Before finishing eight sections they could not stop the rehearsal although vomit on the field. When they puked, felt pain, dizzy on the second rounds, they still had to finish until eight rounds. It such as the best struggle of the Spartans and everybody absolutely did not want to feel that but they did it. It was such a big responsibility as the Spartans.

The quotation below followed up the explanation above.

They had to run a mile around the track at eight o'clock by eighty-nine degrees just for warm up. After that, they had to run the bleachers from twenty rows up and down for eight sections and then back on the track for another loop. They had to do until the fifty rows of the bleachers and of course for thirty loops again. Every player wished to quit the rehearsal. After the second round, a tackle fell to the grass and began vomiting. The heavier players were moving slower and slower. ( *Bleachers*, 2004, page 60-61).

Bleachers also symbolized struggle of fans. The first struggle was getting the tickets. The tickets limited for ten thousand people whereas the citizen of Messina town was eight thousand. Nevertheless, in every games, the bleachers always full of viewer. It showed that the citizen of Messina had to compete with other citizen from different town that loved the Spartans to have their own seat. It meant that they had to queue up to get their own seat. The fans from other town had to come early. They were exhausted and had to snatch away to get position on the bleachers. If the viewer exceeded the bleachers, it meant the last people that wanted to enter the stadium had to go home because of the limited seats. The quotation below showed that the



citizen in the Messina really adored their football team. "No other town really worshiped football as thoroughly and collectively as Messina. "(Grisham, 2004: 5). If they put football became number one sport in Messina, they must be struggle hard to get the first row of the bleachers and never gave their place to others to watch the game.

Ten thousand seats up in the bleachers, for a town with a population of eight thousand on Friday night. They got their paychecks and bought their beer, and they came to town, to The Field where they clustered in one raucous pack at the north end of the stands and made more noise than the students, the band, and the townsfolk combined. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 8).

After they got the ticket, second struggle of fans was supporting their team. They struggled for following and valuing the game. The spectators always became the part of the games. Because of no ticket's number they had to rush and snatch away with the others to the bleachers in getting the best position, as close as the field to admit the team as the best one. They want to give motivation with yelling and singing the Spartans' song. They were witnesses in giving moral support to the Spartans to win the game. When they waited for the gate opened, they sacrificed their time for hours only to support them. They had to come early, getting the start of the others fans. They did not want to miss their idol. As the follower, they always gave the best backing that they could do to the team. They wanted their idol always became the king on the field.

On Friday night the entire town of Messina waited for the gate to open then rushed to the bleachers where seats were claimed and nervous pregame rituals were followed. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 3).

## 2. Bleachers symbolized strong wills

Bleachers symbolized strong wills of the Spartans that they kept in their mindset, the supporters who wanted to support the Spartans on the bleachers and the coach who always trained the boys.

The Spartans' boys had to run the track for two hours and then run on the bleachers until finished eight rounds. They still did the rehearsal and never gave up although they puked on the bleachers. It showed that they kept their mindset to finish the rehearsal although it was hard. They did the rehearsal as the way to improve their skills. It showed by the quotation below.

Paul	:“Remember the time he made us run slot-waggle-
right for two solid hours in practice?”	
Neely	:“ Yeah, because you kept screwin’ up”
Paul	:“ Then, we ran bleachers until we puked”
Neely	:“That was Rake,” Neely mumbled.(Bleachers,
2004, page 14).	

Bleachers kept strong wills of the Spartans that they expected since they were children. They entered the Messina Elementary School. It meant that they were in same institute with Messina High School. They knew about the quality of the Spartans team. It showed by this statement, the Spartans' Coach, Rake had them in uniform when they were in the sixth grade. Four teams- red, blue, gold and black, no green because every kid wanted to wear green, the Spartans' jersey (Grisham, 2004: 13-14). It explained that the kids wanted to wear green jersey; it meant that they wanted to become the Spartans .They learned about Rake's plays. They dreamed of being Spartans and playing before ten thousand fanatics. When they learned Rake's plays, it

meant they sat on the bleachers and watched the game. It proved that they were serious with their dream since they were on elementary school. They had known the Rake's method, running on the bleachers. They kept their strong wills by entering the Messina High School. It meant doing the rehearsal's program, running on the bleachers until finished. They kept strong wills in running the bleachers to win every game.

Second bleachers symbolized strong wills of spectators. They had allocated their time to attend the game before they arrived on the Messina High School. They must be had a plan to follow their idol. They finished their job, arranged time to come on the bleachers and buy the tickets. They were willing queue with the entire people of Messina with other viewers from different town. They had spent money to get their own seat. It supported by quotation that said the entire town of Messina waited for the gate to open. They rushed to the bleachers where seats were claimed. They followed nervous pregame rituals (Grisham, 2004: 3).

The last was strong wills of coach. The coach gave them rehearsal was in purpose to gain strength. He always used the same method in gaining fervency such as running on the bleachers until eight rounds. He set teeth his boys to have the proportional body. When the body was balance with the weight, it would give more power and stamina. Therefore, they could easily finish the real game.

I loved the sound of fifty players stomping up and down the bleachers. You guys are not in shape,” he said, just loud enough to be heard. “Slowest bunch I’ve seen,” he grumbled, again, barely audible. (Bleachers, 2004, page 61).

He determined to give them spirit to finish their job as an athlete. He wanted his boys not easy to proud and surrender with the condition. This was the quotation when the coach barked on the boys,” Never quit, never quit. You win because you are tougher mentally because your training is superior. If you are winning, never quit. If you are losing, never quit. If you are hurt, never quit.” (Grisham, 2004: 120). Let us saw the phrase “your training is superior”, it meant that the coach kept his method in training the Spartans. He used bleachers as an equipment to get the best stamina. The strength of this rehearsal was never easy to surrender with the worst condition. Rake motivated them with barking and mocking with their best effort. Running on the bleachers was such as the hardest running sport. The best effort was bearing down the weakness to reach success. His strong wills in coaching meant never satisfied when winning the game and kept trying to give the best effort exceeded the success before. His strong wills was bearing down the weakness to get the strength in body and mind. Kept trying when faced many problems and giving the best effort was the best solution to solve the problems.

### **3. Bleachers symbolized victory**

Bleachers symbolized victory of the Spartans, the spectators and the Messina town.

Bleachers symbolized victory of the Spartans when the bleachers always full of the spectators in every Spartans' game. Messina town just consisted of eight thousand people. They became witness and proof of the Spartans' glory (Grisham, 2004: 8). Nevertheless there were ten thousand supporters gathered and fulfilled the same place. The Spartans had won the supporters' hand that always supported the game. It invited fans from another town to admire and admit them. The supporters always yelled to the Spartans and jumped up and down on the bleachers. They made deafening sound of the bleachers rattling when the Spartans entered the field, got touchdown or made point. They gave spirit to the team when the team got accident. The moral support from them gave the Spartans spirit to continue and finish the game. It showed by the statement below."It took twenty minutes to gather Rabbit up and place him gently on the stretcher and shove him into an ambulance...ten thousand Messina fans stood and applauded with respect." (Grisham, 2004: 38). They were a shape of admiration to the Spartans' existence. The quotation below supported the explanation above.

The bleachers set up exceed the population of the Messina town and always full... Nobody wanted miss the game. The real fans were there for right reason. The place was packed with complicated loyalties yelling in all direction. (*Bleachers*, 2004, page 65).

Bleachers also symbolized victory of fans. The previous quotation explained that the spectators waited for the gate and rushed the bleachers to follow the

rituals (Grisham, 2004: 3). It showed that when they were waiting, they milled around and threw away inconvenience for the idol. They snatched away to get the seat that they wanted. Their effort were paid when they entered the stadium then sat on the bleachers that they expected. They were satisfied with their effort. They yelled to the Spartans in all direction. They made bleachers rocking by using them to make deafening sound as their own music to glorify the team because of their ecstasy.

The last was the town's victory. Messina became famous town because of the Spartans. It became the host of the party. The stadium occupied ten thousand seats up in the bleachers. It exceeded the population of the town itself (Grisham, 2004: 8). The writer supposed two thousand people from out town had fulfilled the bleachers of ten thousand seats. The Messina got victory because of ten thousand tickets sold out. It meant that the Spartans promoted their town indirectly to the citizen from other city. They probably came with more than two thousand outside Messina's fans to the Messina only to glorify the Messina Spartans.

### **C. The Theme of “*Bleachers*” Novel**

Theme was a central idea. It was introduced firmly on the ideas; actions, characters, statements, symbols, and dialogue. Probably determined by how closely they related to the idea or theme. The author involved the



character in several events to show human being. Theme would exist only when an author had mechanically introduced some concept of life that used to merge element for illustrate.

In this story, the bleachers became the central idea of the story. The characters mostly involved the bleachers in showing their efforts to get their goal. The Spartans got their strength by finishing rehearsal. The supporters were satisfied because sat on the limited bleachers. The Coach was successful with his program, running on the bleachers in having strength. The last as the effect, the Messina town became famous because the bleachers were always full of the spectators. It showed that the symbol of bleachers showed human being of the story.

From the explanation in preceding analysis, it was found that bleachers fulfilled the requirements of a symbol in a literary work. It meant that bleachers could be recognized as the symbol in *Bleachers* novel. It stood with theme in controlling the story. Bleachers symbolized struggle, strong wills and victory. They merged with the theme shaped the story. From the previous explanation, it could be seen that struggle had to do in real action. When they did the action, they needed strong wills that they kept on their mind. They never gave up getting their desirability to get victory. A victory was a proof that their struggle never to no purpose. From the ideas of the bleachers, they drew the theme of the story that **“Success does not happen accidentally”**.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

*Bleachers* novel by John Grisham was an interesting story. The author used bleachers as the title of the story. He also made bleachers become the setting of the work. It was interesting when mostly the conflict happened on the bleachers. It brought a sign to the readers that led to other meaning.

Bleachers were the symbol of the story. From Roberts and Jacobs' theory, they were recognized by signifying a sustained constancy of meaning. Bleachers were a place to sit. They were used by supporters to watch the game. They also had another function such as they were used to give backing and particular rehearsal to the team. Second bleachers appeared to be major important. The narrator took time in describing the bleachers as setting of the play to control the plot of the story. The main character also repeated bleachers in his conversation with other character. Moreover, the last was bleachers referred to significant idea about struggle, strong wills and victory.

Symbol and theme had to stand together to make a literary work. Symbol merged with theme to shape a story. They influenced each other to build one formal unity to complete the essence of the story. Bleachers were the symbol of the play. It explained that struggle had to do in real action.

When they did the action, they needed strong wills that they kept on their mind. Therefore, they never gave up in getting their desirability to get victory. Victory was a proof that their struggle never to no purpose. From the three meanings of bleachers, the writer concluded that the theme of the story was **“Success does not happen accidentally”**.

